The PULPIT

A Periodical of Contemporary Preaching

DECEMBER 1949

Joy
By ERNEST FREMONT TITTLE

Go Make Disciples
By E. G. HOMRIGHAUSEN

I Was in Bethlehem
By DAVID J. EASTBURN

Let's Widen Our Bible Belt
By MELVIN E. WHEATLEY

Adults Can Learn
By JAMES W. CARTY, JR.

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Charles Clayton Morrison, *Editor*

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Because the index was omitted last year, the indexes for both 1948 and 1949 are included in this issue.

Features For January

SAINTS IN NERO'S HOUSEHOLD, a sermon by John Owen Gross, Executive Secretary for the Board of Education of The Methodist Church, highlights important facts in the success of Christianity during the time of Nero—facts which can serve as guides for modern evangels in their efforts to surmount seemingly insurmountable obstacles and evils.

WHEN ALL MEN SPEAK WELL OF YOU is a sermon by Frederick B. Eutsler, pastor of The United Church in Raleigh, North Carolina. The sermon deals with the problem of social approval.

THE UNITED NATIONS—AND IN OUR TIME! is a stimulating revelation of genuine progress. It is a chapel sermon delivered at the College of the Pacific by Andrew Juvinall of Stockton, California. A sound evaluation of important events during 1949.

CHANCE OR PROVIDENCE is a deep call to faith, a good sermon for the beginning of a new year, by Johnstone G. Patrick, pastor of the Spurgeon Memorial Church; St. Peter Port, Guernsey, Channel Islands.

The Preacher Problems department will present the first group of articles in the series, WHAT MAKES A GOOD SERMON? Articles in this first group have been prepared by five outstanding preachers: Clarence Edward Macartney of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Marshall Wingfield of Memphis, Tennessee; Hampton Adams of St. Louis, Missouri; Joseph Fort Newton of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Bishop Gerald Kennedy of Portland, Oregon.

WHO'S WHO IN THIS ISSUE

ERNEST FREMONT TITTLE (1885-1949) graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University in 1906 and from Drew Theological Seminary in 1908. He received honorary degrees from Ohio Wesleyan University, Garrett Biblical Institute, Yale University, and Wittenberg College. During the First World War, he served with the Army Y.M.C.A. in France. Before his appointment to the First Methodist Church in Evanston, Illinois, in 1918, he ministered to churches in Christiansburg, Dayton, Delaware, and Columbus, Ohio. Dr. Tittle was a popular university lecturer and preacher and was the author of numerous books.

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE

The Event of the Month

UNITED observance of the birthday of the Reformation spread this year to at least 125 cities compared with 60 cities last year. In addition to these union services, there must have been thousands of local churches where the message of Protestantism was proclaimed anew from their pulpits. There has been no time when it was so imperative for Protestantism to make itself seen and heard in its united strength. Reformation day affords the ideal occasion for a public demonstration of Protestant solidarity and a fresh exposition of Protestant principles. In comparison with our common heritage as Protestants, the things that divide us into many "churches" become trivial and unworthy of Christ's people. Reformation observance should be a joyous and impressive public event. It can wisely depart somewhat from the type of worship service to which we are accustomed in the sanctuary. In one city, the processional, consisting of a choir of 300 singers and 75 ministers, was led by two men holding aloft a great open Bible which was placed on the speaker's desk. Sometimes a brass band, or merely the cornets and trombones, or an entire orchestra were used to reinforce the organ and choir. And how the people in the crowded auditorium sang "A Mighty Fortress" and "Faith of Our Fathers!" I like the title, "A Protestant Festival of Faith," under which the celebration was projected in most of the cities I visited. The churches of every community—big city, small town and rural—should lay plans now to celebrate Reformation Day next year.

The Protestant Celebration

The Book of the Month

THE GOSPEL AND OUR WORLD, *by Georgia Harkness.* Abingdon Cokesbury. $1.50.

WHEN I receive the announcement of another book by Georgia Harkness, I pretty well know what my next "book of the month" will be. Miss Harkness is an ordained minister, a theological professor, and the author of many books. In this one, she opens with an illuminating analysis of the kind of mentality and the profound spiritual need that are characteristic of "our world." She finds that our churches are not addressing themselves any too effectively or fruitfully to the people who make up the kind of world ours has come to be. With this starter you might expect that she has some novel religion to offer. But you would be mistaken. She calls herself "a middle of the roader" in theology and disclaims even the novelty of a "liberal" or a "conservative" point of view. Instead, she declares that the "central" truths of Christianity "can be revolutionary if they are put to work." And her purpose is to show what these truths are and how they can be put to work. In this, Dr. Harkness is both theologian and preacher. But her theology is not just the repetition of time-worn concepts. Every note of our evangelical faith is sounded, but it all comes to you as a fresh proclamation—as fresh and almost as startling as it must have been when heard in the first century. The author's mind is a rare combination of sound scholarship and good common sense. Her style has just the right amount of that salty quality which lends a savor to every page.

A Thought for the Month

HAVE you noticed how the word "Christianity" has so largely been displaced by the word "religion" in popular usage and even in the pulpit? The modern mind, we are told, is turning to religion. This is a welcome report, if true. But is modern man turning to Christianity? We have philosophy of "religion", psychology of "religion", "religious" education, institute of "religion", school of "religion", "religion" and science, "religion" and culture, "religion" and civilization, "religion" and mental health. These samples could be multiplied indefinitely. Under some of these headings, of course, the Chrisitian faith is tacitly presupposed. But their emphasis represents a tendency in cultural circles, and even in theological seminaries, to wash out the differences among religions and to deal with those aspects which the various faiths share in common. This reduction of the particularities of Christianity to a common denominator with Roman Catholicism and Judaism and many other forms of religion, is expressed in the popular dictum: "Any religion is good if only you live up to it." No intelligent Christian can subscribe to such a statement. Not all religions are good. There are both good and bad religions, and some are better or worse. Religion is universal—all men are religious. The deepest source of the world's troubles today is bad religion. But Christianity cannot be stated in terms of religion in general—its essence is in its particularities. Its outlook on the world of reality—an outlook mirrored in the Bible—is distinctive and unique. No other religion possesses the same outlook or matches it. Christianity is either true or half-true or false. If we believe that it is true, we should not allow our allegiance to be diluted with the false tolerance that is being preached to us in the secular press or through any organization whose catchwords are "good will", "fellowship", "understanding", "brotherhoood", and the like. If it is true that modern man is turning toward religion, Protestantism is presented with a unique responsibility to declare with renewed earnestness its faith in the Christian gospel as the power of God unto salvation.

Are We Losing Christianity?

Charles Clayton Morrison

Joy*

By ERNEST FREMONT TITTLE

JESUS has often been portrayed as a man of sorrows. And such he was. He knew what it means to be poor, to be lonely, to be despised, persecuted and forsaken. He knew what it means to die on a cross.

He might, however, with equal truth be portrayed as a man of joys. He rejoiced in the world of nature, finding more beauty in the wild flowers of the field than in the splendiferous raiment of kings. He was strongly attracted to little children and they to him, which tells us, among other things, that he smiled easily and often. Children do not make up to people who seldom or never smile, nor do such persons take note of children. They are too much engrossed with themselves. Significant also is the fact that he hobnobbed with publicans and sinners, which proclaims not only a divine interest and compassion but also something of human heartiness and joviality. Had he been a crepe-hanger, publicans and sinners, we may be quite sure, would have found ways of avoiding him. His enemies called him a glutton and a drunkard, and he was neither. But this canard may be cited as further evidence that he was not a kill-joy. Whatever else may be said about them, people who distill gloom all over the place are not likely to be charged with excessive delight in eating and drinking. Such a charge in their case simply wouldn't stick. Once he was asked why his disciples did not observe the practice of fasting. Were they less devoted in their religion than the disciples of John the Baptist and the disciples of the Pharisees? His answer was: "Can you make the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?" For him religion was an affair so altogether joyous that fasting seemed out of place.

Jesus did indeed know the meaning of sorrow, yet there is reason to think that no one else who ever lived in this world got more joy out of life than he did. In the Fourth Gospel he is reported as saying at the last: "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

CHRISTIANS ARE SENSITIVE

Now, as it was true of Jesus that he was at once man of sorrows and man of joys, so it is true of Christianity that it makes for both pain and joy. The reason for this is that Christianity makes people more sensitive, more sympathetic and compassionate. Anyone who is morally sensitive may be overwhelmed with self-reproach by an exhibition of bad temper or selfishness or pettiness that would leave a less sensitive person quite undisturbed. Anyone who takes a lively interest in others inevitably gives hostages to fortune. When a man marries and has children born to him, his liability to pain is augmented. Anything that hurts his loved ones will also hurt him. And liability to pain is, of course, enormously increased in those who come to share the compassion of Christ, who identified himself with others to such an extent that he could truthfully say: "Inasmuch as ye have done (this) unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." An Abraham Lincoln, a Lord Shaftesbury, an Albert Schweitzer experiences the sufferings of others as if they were his own. Christianity, moreover, may get a man into trouble. It may land him in a concentration camp, as not a few Christians in our time have discovered.

The sensitivity which Christianity produces makes equally, however, for joy. The capacity to "weep with those who weep" is at the same time the capacity to "rejoice with those who rejoice," and this irrespective of one's own circumstances. Let a man come to share the love of God, and any promise of improvement in the world situation will give him great joy even though he himself has trouble aplenty.

Christianity makes for pain as well as for joy, but it is first and foremost a religion of joy. The early Christians were mostly poor and they were subjected to the most cruel persecution. Yet these poor and harried people were notably happy. In the third century a Christian writer could say: "The Church is the one thing in the world that always rejoices."

KNOWING GOD

Christianity makes for joy because it brings the knowledge of God as revealed in Christ. It is the faith that we men and women are not alone in an uncaring universe but are in the hands of a divine goodness and mercy and power. It is the faith that God is with us in a most real and personal way, and that with him there is forgiveness for sin, healing for sorrow, strength and courage for living in all conditions. It is the faith that human history is the outworking of divine purpose, a purpose of good which holds every individual in its grasp and, although it cannot be worked out full amid the accidents and catastrophes of history, is ultimately beyond defeat.

This faith makes a difference when it comes to outlook on life. To be sure, it is possible to say: "I believe in God," and then live and act as though one had not said it. It is also possible to deny the existence of God and not really mean it, as was the case, perhaps, with the college freshman who, being asked to write a theme on personal beliefs, began by saying: "I am an atheist, thank God." But the denial of God, if it is real and

*This sermon was preached on Sunday, July 24, 1949.

thoroughgoing, is certainly nothing to rejoice in. No meaning in life, no purpose in history, no higher power to which you may turn for help however desperate your need of it—if you really believe this, you may manage somehow to get through the day, perhaps, but you can hardly be hopeful or joyful.

Christian faith does indeed make a difference. St. Paul writes: "Rejoice in the Lord always." This is a possibility. There are many things in this world in which no decent man can rejoice—injustice, needless poverty and suffering, for example. There are personal experiences, such as bitter disappointment or overwhelming loss and pain, in which it would be extremely difficult if not impossible to rejoice. For the Christian, however, there is always something to rejoice in. There is God, "the aid of all that need, the helper of all that flee to (him) for succor, the life of them that believe, and the resurrection of the dead."

HELPING GOD

Christianity provides ground for joy by affirming the reality of God and his unceasing concern for the children of men. It further makes for joy by begetting the desire to cooperate with God in his work of creation. Man is so made that he can find in creative work sufficient incentive to put forth his best effort. This truth about ourselves we may overlook or deny. Some years ago a leading American industrialist declared: "Say what you will, it is the profit motive that makes the wheels of the world go round." And indeed this has been the belief of many in our time. But is it true? You can have a lot of fun with it by applying it to various areas of human life.

Apply it to the world of letters. Say what you will, it was the profit motive that led John Milton to write *Paradise Lost* and dispose of it for ten pounds—fifty dollars. Or to the world of education. Say what you will, it was the profit motive that led George Herbert Palmer to devote his life to teaching, although he did once say that Harvard University paid him for what he would gladly pay for the privilege of doing if he could afford it. Or to the world of science. Say what you will, it was the profit motive that led Pierre and Marie Curie to engage in scientific research and when they made their great discovery to turn over to some hospital every crystal of radium salt they were able to extract from tons of rock. Or to certain chapters of American history. Say what you will, it was the profit motive that brought the Mayflower to these shores and subsequently led one of the founding fathers of this nation to say: "Blandishments will not fascinate us, nor will threats of halters intimidate us, for under God we are determined that wheresoever, whensoever, howsoever we are called on to make our exit we will die free men."

Our industrialist no doubt was thinking especially or solely of the world of business. But is it true that the only motive which operates within the business man is the simple desire for profit? Certainly this is not true of all business men. There are those, probably a very large number, who are influenced quite as much by the desire for recognition in the business world as men of integrity and ability and by the kick they get out of self-identification with a great enterprise.

NOBLER MOTIVES

It would be nearer the truth to declare: "Say what you will, it is not the profit motive only or chiefly that makes the wheels of the world go round." We human creatures are bad enough, God knows, but we are not so bad that we cannot be induced to put forth our best efforts unless there is held before us as a carrot before the nose of a donkey the hope of great material reward. The truth of the matter is, we are sent into the world to create something and thereby develop and enrich our own personality and come to know something of the joy of God in his work of creation.

Watch any child build a house with blocks. What a wonderful time he is having! But when the last block has been put in its place—bang!—down comes the house. The fun was in the building. We may well feel sorry for poor little rich children whose toys are all bought for them at outlandish prices, especially if we have had the experience of making bats out of fence rails, balls out of pieces of cord and rubber bands, wagons out of discarded wheels and soap boxes, playhouses out of anything that happened to be at hand. The product of our labor was not much to look at perhaps, but oh! what fun we had making it. There were times when our delight was such that even a summons to dinner was an unwelcome interruption.

The same holds true of adults. Dean Inge hit the nail on the head when he said: "The happy people are those who are producing something. The bored people are those who are consuming much and producing nothing." (He is also quoted as saying: "Doctors are fond of sending their fashionable patients to take a rest cure. In nine cases out of ten a work cure would do them far more good.")

Christianity brings out the great truth that a man's joy does not consist in "the abundance of his possessions," but rather in the abundance of his creations. And more, Christianity gives men the power to rise above self in devotion to others. That there is joy in love and service to others no one will deny who has tried it. Jacob Riis tried it years ago in Mulberry Bend. When he first came upon it as a cub reporter, Mulberry Bend was the worst slum in New York City. Its squalor smelled to heaven, its crime and death rate was appalling. Some years later he saw it transformed into a beautiful park, about which he wrote: "The children who were dancing there in the sunlight were to have a better time, please God. We had given them a chance. The place had been redolent of crime. When the last house was torn down in the Bend, I recalled seventeen murders that had been committed in this one block, and I had doubtless forgotten many others. In the four years that followed I was called only once to record a deed of violence in the neighborhood, and that was when a stranger came there and killed himself. The Bend had become decent and orderly because the sunlight was let in and shone upon children who had at

last a chance to play. That was what the park meant."

That is what it meant to the people living in the neighborhood. What did it mean personally to Jacob Riis, who had badgered greedy landlords, Tammany Hall, and an inert public into doing something about the Bend? What did the park mean to this man who had worked his head off to bring it into being? We may well believe that for him it meant joy unspeakable.

THIS JOY IS FOR ALL

Now from all this it follows, does it not? that joy is within reach for any one of us. To be sure, we cannot win joy by an act of the will, as though one should say "Go to now, and be happy." The shopworn advice "force a smile and live up to it" is not of much value, as some of us know from experience. Being joyous is not so simple a matter as that. It is a matter of coming to know God and having a part in his work of creation and redemption. But this we can undertake to do.

We can try to increase our faith in God by thinking and reading about the Christian faith, by associating with people who have this faith and whose lives go far to validate it, and by acting on such faith as we already have. If we have but the conviction that there are forces in the universe making for good, we can align ourselves with these forces and do all in our power to make them prevail where we live. Also, we can undertake to create something of value to somebody, if only a vegetable garden or a pair of socks. We can do things for others. The conversion of a crime- and disease-ridden slum into a beautiful park may be beyond our power to accomplish. But the joy which Jacob Riis found, great though it was, was probably no greater than might be found in providing for just one boy or girl the opportunity for more abundant living or in saving any individual human life from unnecessary suffering and despair.

Joy can and will be ours insofar as we fulfill the conditions of its achievement; which raises the question whether we are not morally bound to be joyful. Is it perhaps the case that no disappointment, however bitter, no loss or grief or pain is valid excuse for inflicting gloom upon ourselves and others?

Robert Louis Stevenson might easily have given way to bitterness and self-pity. Afflicted with tuberculosis, he once confided to his friend George Meredith that for fourteen years he had not had a day of real health but had done much of his work in bed, writing when his throat was torn by coughing and his head swam from weakness. But Stevenson considered it a duty to be happy. He wrote:

> If I have faltered more or less
> In my great task of happiness;
> If I have moved among my race
> And shown no glorious morning face;
> If beams from happy human eyes
> Have moved me not; if morning skies,
> Books and my food, and summer rain
> Knocked on my sullen heart in vain:—
> Lord, thy most pointed pleasure take
> And stab my spirit broad awake.

Listen also to Helen Keller saying: "If I regarded my life from the standpoint of the pessimist I should be undone. I should ask in vain for the light which does not visit my eyes and the music that does not ring in my ears. I should beg day and night and never be satisfied. I should sit apart in awful solitude, a prey to fear and despair. But since I consider it a duty to myself and others to be happy I escape a misery worse than physical deprivation."

The determination to be happy, to win joy for oneself and others by coming to know God and having a part in his work of creation and redemption—here, certainly, is challenge to all that is good and heroic in the human spirit.

A Pastoral Prayer

By LORING DUBOIS CHASE

GREAT KING OF PEACE, whose will it is that the bow should be broken, the spear be cut in sunder, and the chariot be burned in the fire; age upon age thou hast sent prophets and apostles to proclaim the brotherhood of man; thou hast given thy holy son to turn the hearts of men to Thee and to one another. The mighty have fallen, and weapons of war have perished, yet men have not forsworn their foolish ways.

The secret weapons we have brandished, are now in other hands, rendering useless all the armour wherein we have trusted; thus we learn in fear what we would not learn in love: that all men are indeed one family.

Send to us still the messengers of peace and the ambassadors of good will, so that our brotherhood may be one, not of forced proximity, but of mutual trust, affection, and help.

Make us valiant for the warfare that is not carnal. Put in our hands the heavenly weapons of truth and justice, of knowledge and love, that we may be mighty to pull down the strong holds of pride and envy, of poverty and fear, of misunderstanding, hate, and greed. We pray in the name of the Prince of Peace, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bethlehem

I shall not tarry over scrolls
  That chart the planets of the night;
Nor follow paths of endless goals,
  The ordered orbs of Heaven's light;
Nor shall I halt with sense and mind
  At palace, porch or merchant's mart:
My caravan shall press to find
  A Savior for my hungry heart.

—Harry Webb Farrington

According to Halford Luccock, "Few people put Christ on their shopping list."

Go Make Disciples

By E. G. HOMRIGHAUSEN

"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations."—Matthew 28:19.

EVANGELISM is not an extra task in which the Christian or the Church may engage at will. Without evangelism no one becomes Christian and no one remains Christian. Evangelism is not merely winning people to discipleship to Christ, but it is a constant and perennial process of holding them true to Christ, and of challenging them to press on toward a full-statured life in Christ. No one inherits Christianity biologically; no one becomes a Christian by proxy; and no one automatically remains Christian. The Gospel must be heard over and over again, and we must respond to it over and over again. "Watch and pray lest—."

THE GOSPEL MEANS EVANGELISM

Evangelism is in the nature of the Gospel. The Gospel is good news, and whoever heard of extraordinary news being kept secret! If God has revealed to men the secret of his purpose, and the power of his saving grace to remake men into his sons and daughters, then the news must be told! This is extraordinary news. It is news of a unique kind. The discovery of a sure cure for cancer would be news. But the gospel is greater news about a greater event and fact. There is something marvelous about the Gospel. It is almost too good to be true. It has about it a note of salvation, of redemption, of victory. The preacher and the witness of this Good News must have about him the breathless joy of a herald. It is unthinkable that any Church or any Christian should not be joyously evangelstic.

THE BASIS OF EVANGELISM

Evangelism rests upon the seeking and sacrificial love of God. The Gospel issues from the heart of the living God. He does not remain aloof from men; he comes to them where they are in the form of a man. God's love for men makes him the Great Evangelist. He seeks men out, and calls them home. He is the author of the good news; his son brings the news in terms of a ministry centering in the cross and resurrection, and the Holy Spirit applies it to our hearts. God's love reconciles men to himself. It also reconciles men to one another. Those who take the love of God seriously cannot make that love something casual. It is a costly love; it is a miraculous love. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The love of God in action in Jesus Christ is the Gospel. Evangelism is inherent in the love of God, for it is a love that seeks men out, that reconciles them to God, that reconciles them to one another, that forgives men their sins, and that opens up "heavenly places" through the resurrection.

THE AUTHORITY FOR EVANGELISM

Evangelism issues from the authority of Jesus Christ. He is the authority on the things of God, of man, and of history. One cannot argue with his words: they are truth, spirit and life. His moral stature is unique among man. His death on the cross is at once the manifestation of absolute obedience to God and of abandoning love for sinful men. His resurrection from the dead is the clear and shattering conquest of the power of death. His resurrection opened up the "heavenly places" beyond. His order is eternal. This Jesus, after making an adequate revelation of God said to his disciples, "Go . . ." We would expect him to say that, and we would expect them to obey such a Lord. They had no alternative. In the light of what Jesus said, was, and did, those who call him Lord have no other alternative. We have not yet taken the Lordship of Jesus Christ seriously! The authority of Jesus Christ is total and global. He bids us make disciples of *all* men, to go into *all* the world, to teach men *all* things he has commanded, and he bids his disciples to go into *all* nations. He has *all* power and will be with his disciples throughout *all* time. Surely, a Lord of this stature must be obeyed, and made in deed the Lord.

LOVE REQUIRES IT

Evangelism is inherent in our love for the neighbor. This kind of love is learned from Christ Jesus, who befriended us while we were yet unfriendly, and even enemies. He did not despise us. He was not ashamed to call us brethern in spite of our treatment of him. Real neighbor love involves identity with all men. The good neighbor is one who does not pity others, he is humanly identified with others. He is as human and as approachable as was Jesus. Good though he was, sinners did not feel ill at ease in his presence. Neighbor-love desires the best for the neighbor. And the best is the Gospel. One might leave his children a million dollars and think he had given them the best boon in life. Yet, what greater boon is there in life than the Gospel? This is God's best gift to man. In it, men find God, and by finding God they find themselves. If we love our neighbors as ourselves, we must offer them the best gift of God.

THE NATURE OF MAN REQUIRES IT

Evangelism is inherent in the nature of man. No man becomes fully human until he becomes a Christian. He

is not real until he has been made real by Christ. To become a Christian is to become a man according to God's intention. The Gospel is meant to save men, save them from their false pseudo selves and save them for their true real selves. Man is restless until he finds his rest in God. He is abnormal until he has started to become normal in Jesus Christ. Evangelism is simply trying to help people to become real. It is helping them to find themselves. Evangelism is a high form of personal counseling.

THE NATURE OF SOCIETY REQUIRES IT

Evangelism is involved in the nature of true society. Aristotle called man a social animal, and so he is. But man desires a different kind of social life from that which is desired by animals. Animals seek herds and aggregations of their own kind, but men seek personal community. Only in truth and love can we approach real community life. That truth and love are found in Jesus Christ. Those who cohere in him have a personal kind of community life that is different from other types of organized life. This truth is evident to all who read today. The world is desperately in need of a new ethos, a community spirit. The world problem now is: How shall we live together? What shall be the basis of the new order? Evangelism today has taken on a global nature. We speak of the world mission of the Church, and so we should. Evangelism is a must for the World Church.

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH REQUIRES IT

Evangelism is absolutely essential for every Christian and every church because only by evangelism will persons be brought within the orbit of God's saving and life-changing grace in Jesus Christ. The Church and the Christian exist by witnessing, as a candle exists by burning. A great many churches are dead because they no longer know the glory of the Gospel; they no longer appreciate the marvel of God's miraculous grace, they no longer realize what a wonderful thing it is to have heard and known the Gospel. Non-evangelistic Churches or Pastors are no longer Christian! They have no reproductive power. They harbour in them the seeds of death.

Evangelism is also a must for every Christian and every Church because it is only through obedience in this respect that the gifts of the Spirit come to them. Only as men are in the way of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ will they know the meaning of the saving grace of God. Only thus will they know what neighbor-love means. And only thus will they know the Gospel. Evangelism, or witness, is a choice means of grace, a channel of blessing, because when we are evangelistic, when we love the neighbor enough to share the Gospel with him, then we enter more fully into the secret meaning of the Gospel.

Only an active teacher knows the meaning of the subject he teaches, and the secret joy of helping others to enter into a knowledge and appreciation of the subject. It is given to those who share the Gospel to know its glory and its power. It is also given them to know the fellowship of the Gospel which is vouchsafed to the two or three who gather together in the name of Christ.

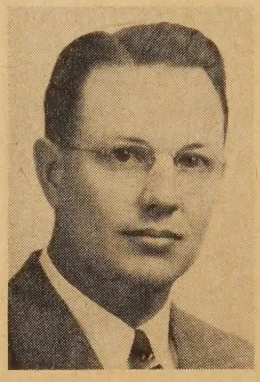
Evangelism, so conceived, is not a *must*; it is a *privilege*.

I Was In Bethlehem*

By DAVID J. EASTBURN

BETHLEHEM is a beautiful village, although I have not always appreciated its beauty. My earliest memories of it are the mingled emotions of a boy who knew he was not wanted.

My parents did not want me. They abandoned me when I was a baby by leaving me behind in a room at the Inn while they continued on as members in a caravan. They must have seen the hump growing between my shoulders. They must have noticed my curved and twisted spine. They must have said, "Darious will only grow into a helpless cripple. We may as well dispose of him while he is still young."



I was not wanted by the inn keeper and why he ever cared for me I shall never know. He was never really kind. He was only interested in what I could do for him. Earlier he had tried to train me for a servant about the Inn but that venture was to end in failure. I remember one night when I had carried some wine into the dining room. I placed the pitcher on the table before a beautifully dressed woman. She looked at me and shrieked, "A hunchback! Get him out of here! Get him out of here! He frightens me!" On another occasion a man accused the inn keeper of housing beasts in his Inn, after I had returned from taking some things to his room.

I

So the stable became my home. I was not too happy in it—at first. I accepted my assignment as I had learned to accept everything else in life, stoically. I contented myself by believing that the gods had planned life the way it was and I could do nothing about my condition.

Life in the stable was not as miserable as I had first expected. It became pleasant and enjoyable. The animals seemed to accept me as one of themselves—something people would not do. "Animals," I told myself, "do not see anything out of the ordinary in my distorted frame. They look upon me for the necessity which makes it possible for them to exist."

I can never forget one night! It was midwinter. The

*Adapted from "The Ragged Cloak" by Margaret Sangster.

animals were all in their places. I had fed them once but the night would be long so I began carrying them a little more hay. They seemed pleased with my doing. A donkey stretched out his neck and rubbed his velvet-like nose against my arm as if to say, "Thankyou for your kindness."

As I went for another armful of hay, I passed by the door of the stable and heard a commotion out in the courtyard. I was about to pass it by with the thought that it was only some more pilgrims who were seeking lodging for the night. If such were the case, I thought, they will not find shelter here. The Inn had been filled since early evening. Great crowds of people had been coming to Jerusalem because Caesar had demanded that they come and pay their taxes. Jerusalem could not lodge all the people. Many of them overflowed into the outlying villages; therefore people were coming to Bethlehem in search of living quarters.

I usually did not pay attention to activities in the courtyard but this night I opened the stable door. There, in the afterglow of late evening, stood a man holding the reins of a donkey's bridle. On the donkey's back was the figure of a woman.

In a pleading voice, the man said to the inn keeper: "You must take her in. She cannot travel a step farther. Her time has come."

I looked at the woman and wondered—what did he mean, "her time has come"? Could she be ready to die, I wondered, and shuddered as the thought entered my mind. But my wondering was halted abruptly by the stern voice of the inn keeper: "There is no room, I tell you. There is no room in the Inn."

"But she must lie down immediately," pleaded the man. "Surely you can see . . ." and he made a gesture in the direction of the woman on the donkey. Seeing her, the man seemed to forget the plea he was making for a room, and stepping close to her, he touched her hand gently and asked, ever so lovingly, "The pain, Mary, the pain. Can you bear it?" "Yes, Joseph; yes, I can bear it," said the woman in the sweetest and most melodious voice I had ever heard. Then something came into me, and something went out of me. I felt a prickling feeling in my aching, twisted back. I, too, had learned how to bear pain, but this woman, what pain was hers! She could not be out there in the cold of a night on a donkey. I took a jerky step forward, opening the door of the stable as I did. "The stable," I called; "the stable is warm and clean."

The Inn keeper turned swiftly but remained silent. The man holding the donkey's bridle gave a little exclamation of relief. The woman on the donkey raised her head, turned, and looked at me. Across the purple twilight of the courtyard her eyes sought mine and then she smiled. She smiled at me, a hunchback. Her smile was as sweet, as tragic, as unearthly as her voice. "I can indeed lie in the stable," she said. "The lad is kind, Joseph. Please help me into the stable."

Scrambling hastily back from the doorway, somehow forgetting my own agony, I found myself gathering up great armfulls of hay and throwing them into a corner, the corner farthest from the animals. A million thoughts rushed through my mind, yet one held them all together. I wanted to do something for this woman who had smiled upon me. There could not be another person in all the world, I thought, who was as starved as I for a smile of sympathy, a smile of appreciation, a smile of understanding. For that smile I would do anything and endure any pain. After all, what was a little more pain in addition to that which I already knew. Yet the question arose in my mind, what could I do? But I must do something to make her smile at me again. I looked at the hay. It would not be as comfortable as an inn bed but then it was blessed with the memories of sunshine and flowers growing wild. It would be comfortable . . . only . . . hay is prickly. Could a woman who was weary and ill rest in comfort on it or would the sharp thistles irritate her soft, delicate skin? One doesn't think through to conclusions on occasions like this, so I jerked off my shabby cloak. It caught on the hump between my shoulders. At any other time, the pain would have been excruciating and unbearable, but as I remember now, I didn't even feel it. Finally, it was free and I spread my worn and tattered cloak smoothly over the hay.

II

By now Mary and Joseph had entered the stable. Mary hung heavily upon Joseph's arm. A little lamb—scarcely large enough to walk—wobbled out from a stall and stopped in the path of the couple. The Inn keeper spoke coarsely, "Darious, keep these animals out of the way. Can't you see . . .?" His voice stopped. He glanced toward Mary. I followed his glance. Then I knew what Joseph had meant when he said "her time has come," for she was great with child.

I saw Joseph help Mary upon the bed of hay over which my ragged cloak was spread for a blanket. I heard the inn keeper say, "I will try to send one of the serving girls to help out, but we are overcrowded with guests tonight and I am not sure we will be able to spare anyone." I saw him turn and leave the stable. As he went through the door, he cast a quick look back into the dimly lighted corner of the stall, which was as much as to say that he was glad to be rid of the whole affair.

I stood there just looking and wondering—I do not remember how long. Then I heard Joseph speaking to me, "Boy," he said, and his voice was kind but had a trace of excitement and alarm in it, "please bring me a lantern and some water." I cannot remember when I was ever so happy. All my life I had cared for animals in the stable. Now two *people* were gladly accepting my services. Little it was, but at least I could get a lantern and bring a basin of warm water from the kitchen. I read an expression of thankfulness on the face of Joseph as I waited happily upon them. Shyly I stole a glance toward Mary. Her face was drawn with pain. When she saw me looking into her eyes she smiled again, and for me, heaven opened in all its beauty and glory.

Outside twilight turned to darkness. The night hours grew until midnight had come and departed. For a few hours I lived as a human being. I forgot my grotesque form. I forgot my hunched back. I forgot the pain that shot through my shoulders and back, as I joyously

carried out the wishes of Joseph. Somehow as I helped another sufferer I felt maybe after all there was a God, a God who would even be interested in me.

III

Well after midnight I returned from the kitchen with more water. I was about to speak to Joseph when that which I saw halted me. There in Mary's arms was a babe. I felt a strange new kinship with him such as I had never felt before. I did not know then what the prophets had said about this babe. I did not know that I was looking upon the divine Son of God. In my ugliness I had been taught to believe that God was a possession only for those who could worship in the temple. This kinship toward the newborn babe, I assured myself, was just a strange connection coupled to the fact that the babe had been born in the stable where I attended the animals. The babe looked like never a babe had ever looked before. He didn't look newborn. He looked as if the world he had just entered had always been his home. His eyes were eyes that might have looked across vast distances. His rose-leaf hands were held quietly upon his breast. He did not cry. He just laid there in the manger, wrapped in the swaddling clothes of a little baby.

Outside I heard a loud commotion. I stepped to the door, opened it just a crack and peered out into the night, but the night was not dark. The courtyard was brilliantly lighted. I stepped out into it among the people from the Inn. They did not notice me now, so excited were they. One said, "It is an omen." Another shouted, "It's a sign." Another cried, "The prophets said this would happen when our Messiah was born." They were all looking up toward the heavens. The pain in my back had never permitted me to look upward before, but now I endure the pain as I turned my head slowly upward. There in the sky was a star, and from it a brilliant light was shining.

My attention was drawn to a small group of men. They were shepherds from the hills. They were saying, "The angels have spoken to us. The angels said our Savior was born here in Bethlehem tonight. The angels said we could find him here in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes. We have come to worship him."

A Savior! A Savior! And I ministered at his birth. The shepherds did not know it, for just then the inn keeper hurried to them and exclaimed: "You will find him in there," and he pointed toward the stable.

The noise in the courtyard suddenly stopped as though a priest were pronouncing the benediction. Quietly, worshipfully, reverently the shepherds entered the stable. Close behind them was the inn keeper and his wife. Then followed the guests from the inn. The shepherds moved slowly up to the place where they could see the Christ Child. One fell upon his knees. Another clasped his hands before him in prayer. Another stood in wonderment and awe at that which he beheld. I pushed my way alongside the crowd to a place where I could see the Holy Family. The babe—our Savior—looked like no other newborn babe. His mother, lying upon my ragged cloak, smiled when she saw me.

The inn keeper's wife noticed my old cloak. This was not good enough for the one who bore the savior of men, she murmured half to herself, as she hurried to the inn and returned with clean white linen. Almost repugnantly she took hold of my cloak and pulled it from the bed of hay and as quickly as possible dropped it on the ground. As she put the clean linen around the mother and child I fastened my eyes upon my cloak. For the first time since I had removed it I began to feel cold. Not only did my body tingle with the cold, but I no longer felt a spiritual warmth within. My cloak lying upon the ground was a sure sign that my services were no longer wanted. They were not good enough for people, of course not for God.

IV

Discarded or not, the cloak was still mine. An impulse from within caused me to lunge forward and painfully pick it up. It was all I had left of the smile that had cheered and warmed me so. To me it was not just a ragged old piece of cloth, it was part of that infant gently lying by his mother's side. It was part of the starlight that shown so brightly in the courtyard. It was part of the message the angels had sung to the shepherds on the hillside.

I put the cloak about my shoulders, conscious that all eyes were turned toward me. I felt strangely conscious and my first impulse was to slink back along the dimly lighted wall. That I could not do. Something—something I could not understand was happening to me. Where was the hump between my shoulders? Where was the pain that had always been in my back? Where was my crooked spine that had kept my face always toward the ground? Where was this ugliness of life that had made me a creature of the stable? They were gone, and I stood upright.

For the first time in my life I realized that the Divine had touched my life. How terrible of me to have thought all these years that God was not interested in all his creatures—even a hunch-back. Now I realized in all my new vigor and strength, how ugly the physical is without the Divine.

No longer did I have a desire to hide in the shadows of the stable. Humbly I knelt, quite unaware that it was my own voice saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and good will toward men." In my heart there was peace—and there was good will.

* * *

December Twenty-Fourth

Tomorrow You are born again
Who died so many times.
Do You like the candle-light,
Do You like the chimes?

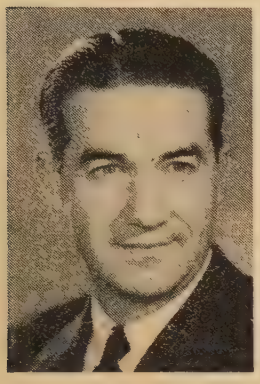
Do You stop to wonder
Why men never see
How very closely Bethlehem
Approaches Calvary?

—Eleanor Slater

Let's Widen Our Bible Belt

By MELVIN E. WHEATLEY

IF MAN could live by mechanical power, then a D C 6 might save the world. If a man could live on vitamin compounds, then enriched bread might be a sufficient diet. If man could live on slap-stick comedy, then Lew Costello might be the modern Messiah.



But man cannot live by mechanical power, for when that D C 6 stops at the end of the runway, whether pilot or passenger, he must possess the power to walk the earth as a person. Man cannot live on vitamin compounds, for after enriched bread has filled his stomach, his heart knows hungers that are still unsatisfied. Man cannot live on slap-stick comedy, for when the comedian's own baby boy drowns in a fish pond, then who can doubt that life is something more than a hilarious joke. Man's needs are numerous; man's hungers are persistent; man's experiences are strenuous. Which is just the reason he must have resources for living that provide more power than a high octane motor, more nourishment than a bakery product, and more insight than a grade B movie.

Across the centuries man has found just such resources for living in the books we call the Bible. In darkness it has been a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path. In confusion it has pointed to the way, the truth and the life. In despair it has promised hope. In guilt is has assured forgiveness. In doubt it has engendered faith.

TESTIMONIALS FROM THE GREAT

Abraham Lincoln said of it: "Take all of the book upon reason that you can and the balance by faith, and you will live and die a better man." William Gladstone declared: "I have known ninety-five great men of the world in my time and of them eighty-seven were followers of the Bible." Theodore Roosevelt had many interests and among them was a devout study of the scriptures. He once wrote: "To every man who faces life with a real desire to do his part in everything, I appeal for the study of the Bible. No book of any kind ever written has so affected the whole life of people."

Handel brooded over the book of Revelation until he wrote a Hallelujah Chorus. Palestrina, Bach, Hayden, Mendelssohn, and Wagner all consciously derived their noblest works from the Bible. When one thinks of the most impressive paintings of the world, one's mind turns to Da Vinci's "Last Supper", Raphael's "Sistine Madonna", the "Madonna of the Chair", and "Transfiguration"; Ruben's "Descent from the Cross" and Rembrandt's Biblical paintings and etchings. Shakespeare is unintelligible at points to the biblical illiterate, including twelve hundred quotations from or allusions to thirty-six different Bible books. John Ruskin spoke of it as "the one essential part of all my education."

Overwhelmed by the mass of evidence available from the realms of art and politics and music and literature, John Greenleaf Whittier summarized the influence of the Bible in the past in the lines:

> "We search the world for truth; we cull
> The good, the pure, the beautiful
> From carven stone and written scroll.
> From all old flower-fields of the soul,
> And, weary seekers of the best,
> We come back laden from our quest
> To find that all the sages said
> Is in the book our mothers read."

No less extravagant but more recent is the judgment of H. G. Wells that "The Bible has been the Book that held together the fabric of western civilization. It has been the handbook of life to countless millions of men and women. The civilization we possess could not have come into existence and could not have been sustained without it."

SCRIPTURAL ILLITERACY

And yet, despite this indisputable influence of the Bible in the past we have cause to wonder to what degree that influence is being renewed in the present. The truth seems to be that for some years the Bible has served more as an ornament than as an instrument. We handle it more to dust it than to understand it. The modern bride may carry it in her wedding but as soon as the procession is over she packs it away among her souvenirs. The modern politician may swear on it as he takes office but he seldom swears by it afterwards. Thus it seems fair to say that if in honesty we must soon start singing "Faith of our *grandfathers* living still" we must also soon start to sing, "My *grandmother's* old Bible is true."

Anyone who leads discussion groups on religious theme among adults as well as youth, clergymen as well as laymen, knows how true this it. My favorite story to describe the state of our scriptural illiteracy used to be to tell of the young lady who thought the epistles were the sisters of the apostles, but ever since a "youth instituter" from one of our best churches piped up to inquire whose sisters they really were I've been looking for another illustration.

To be sure in recent years the *sale* of Bibles has reached an all time high. During the war especially it set new records; but there was one book which outsold it. Do you remember what it was? The American Red Cross First Aid Manual! A rather provocative coinci-

dence to say the least, strongly suggesting that the Bible was bought as an emergency manual too. And as such, if the whole truth were now known, has since been stored neatly away with those triangle bandages and its truths promptly forgotten along with those dimly remembered pressure points.

THE BIBLE AND CIVILIZATION

But does it really matter, this loss of the Bible from our priority list of necessary equipment for effective living in our day? That is the real question! And Royce Brier, answering, insists that it does. In his San Francisco Chronicle column he commented recently on a University of Denver report that 6,000 out of 9,000 students polled claimed they never read the Bible. "This could," he says, "be the most significant news story ever published in America, because America was built by Bible-reading people. Indeed we can go much farther than that, and say that the western civilization was built by Bible reading people. Without the Bible as the foundation for a religion, whatever would have happened in the West in the past thousand years would have been inconceivably different from what did happen. . . . The foundation of the Western present as of the Western past and any Western future at all, is the moral order which has its most effective expression in the Bible."

So speaks one of our leading west coast columnists. Add to his word how the testimony of one of the keenest religious observers of recent years, if you would get an outline of the relevance of the Bible to the life of our day, for Dr. William Adam Brown has written: "Every great reformation in the Christian Church has begun with a revival of Biblical study. The Bible inspired the mystics of the Middle Ages to cultivate the interior life. It gave Luther the impetus which led to the great ecclesiastical house-cleaning we call the reformation; it occasioned the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God which ushered in the foreign missionary movement. It is the source book to which our modern reformers go for their social gospel. No other single influence has contributed so much to the Christian life as the daily reading of the Bible."

In other words: In order to understand what we are as Americans, and in order to become more than we are as Christians, the Bible is for us today required reading! These would seem sufficient reasons then to widen our Bible belt.

ABUSING THE BIBLE

Lest I be misunderstood, however, let me hasten on now to amplify what I mean by Bible reading. Most certainly I am not advocating the statistical approach. For example, one incarnation of an adding machine who mistakes himself for a saint has read the Bible so much he now knows that it contains 3,566,480 letters, 773,692 words, 31,173 verses, 1,189 chapters and 66 books. The word "Lord" occurs 1855 times, the word "and" 4,627 times and the word "Reverend" but once. All of which proves—well, it proves that with all his adding he has added nothing to his life.

But neither am I advocating the proof-text approach, the technique of those Bible battlers who think of the scriptures mainly as an arsenal for arguments. I know some of those warriers. They can send their enemies to hell with quotations from every book in both Testaments, but they cannot lead even their best friend to heaven because of the ugliness of the spirit which they manifest.

WHAT THE BIBLE IS

Let us be clear then, we are advocating an increase in Bible reading not as an exorcism for effecting spiritual magic, but as an exercise for developing spiritual muscles. This means we approach the Bible not as "a book of quotations" but as "the literary expression of the religious development of the Hebrew people culminating in the life and teachings of Jesus."

We approach it as a "literary expression" in order to keep our thinking straight on what the Bible is not as well as on what it is. It is not a scientific journal, a medical manual, a history text, or an astrologer's chart. Those who wrote its contents would be the most amazed of all to know that it had, nevertheless, been treated as all of these things. It is a conglomeration of books on religious life, written "on two continents, in three languages, by a hundred authors, scattered over a thousand years." "Let us be fanciful" writes W. A. Smart; "Suppose that someone should bind together as one book a life of Augustine, some national pure food laws, some private correspondence, a hymn book, a history of the United States, Phillips Brooks' sermons, Poor Richard's Almanac, the criminal code of the State, a play of Shakespeare's a prediction of the end of the world, and one of Emerson's essays. Bind these together as one book and tell people that they shall read it through, a page at a time, because it is the world's greatest masterpiece. The few who might try to read it in this way would soon become discouraged and if any should stoutly persevere to the end he would probably claim additional credit just because he had persisted in spite of his mental confusion."

THE BIBLE A UNITY

"And yet," says Dr. Smart, "there are parallels in the Bible for every type of literature in that chaotic list, and more besides." Meaning, of course, that a first step towards reading any of it intelligently is a clear understanding of the kind of literature with which we are dealing.

Such an understanding is aided by the recognition of the fact that the Bible is a literary expression which came down to us in many diverse forms, and yet it contains a unifying theme running throughout. It is a laboratory report of God's progressive revelation of Himself and his ways to man. In the beginning God creates. In the end He reigns. All the way between God lives. That is the unifying theme which runs throughout the Bible. Yet this theme has its development. Harold Bosley reminds us that "its records begin with nomadic, semi-barbaric peoples and end in the libraries of Greece and Rome. They begin with places

of worship that are flat stones laid by the springs of oasis or on top of a high hill and end chanting psalms in Herod's great temple in Jerusalem. They begin with the idea that God is the war-god of their tribe, a vengeful, capricious man endowed with divine powers, and end with a God who is the Father of all men whose essential nature is love."

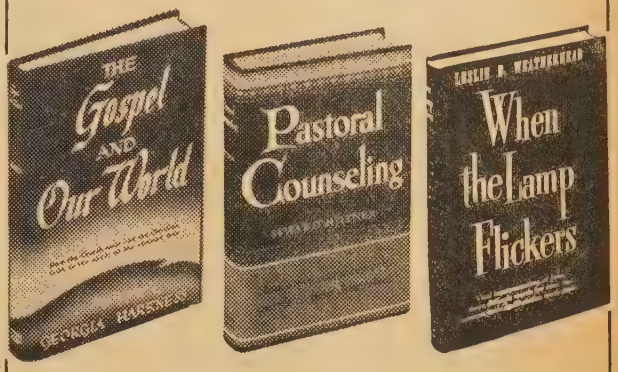
And yet what confusion has arisen from the failure to recognize this progressive development within the Bible. Controversialists have made as the test of orthodoxy the question, "Is it Spiritual?" Failing utterly to understand that as long as the books of the Bible are treated as if they were all of equal worth this question is unintelligible, for on that basis you can prove just about anything you decide upon to prove as scriptural from polygamy to celibacy; from human sacrifice to vicarious suffering; from witchcraft to ethical monotheism. In the same ways others have made the test of orthodoxy believing the Bible from "kiver to kiver", never pausing to ask who first made that a test. Did Jesus? Of course not, for he said, "Ye have heard it said of old time . . . but I say unto you!" Did Martin Luther? Hardly, for that founder of Protestantism and great biblical scholar repudiated whole books of the scripture. He once expressed the wish that the book of Esther had never been written and brushed the New Testament document of James aside as a "mere epistle of straw." Then it must have been John Wesley of Methodist fame. Quite the contrary, he said that some of the Psalms ought never to be taken on a Christian's lips, and if you don't know what he means read Psalm 109 today at the dinner table.

THE CLIMAX IS CHRIST

But can we not see that this developmental, progressive revelation aspect of the Bible, when it has not been recognized, has been a source of confusion. As a matter of fact, its very presence is the strongest evidence of the authenticity of the Bible as a record of life. For who doubts that life does develop. With almost scientific honesty, therefore, the Bible records do show that man's life, his orientation to his world, his integration of himself, his relationships to his fellow beings and to the Supreme Being is a developmental affair. And so they make no attempt to deny the fact that in the past, when God spoke to babes, he babbled. But recognizing this with honesty, the scriptures hold to one point with tenacity; even when it was spiritual babes who misunderstood him, it was God who spoke!

And yet we do not need to stop there. For how can we fail to be reminded this Advent Season, that in his efforts to reveal himself to man, God has not always been limited to spiritual babes. In one point of time in man's history he did speak distinctly and clearly to and thru one who was born as a babe all right, but who lived and died as the Master of men. And just because the Bible does culminate in the life and teachings of this Jesus, if for no other reason, it does become required reading for those who would call themselves Christian. The final authority for Christians, at least

To *Own* And To *Give*



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for Protestants, is not an institution, however venerable, nor even a book, however revered; rather it is a Person. The mind, the spirit, the person of Christ. These constitute the final authority for Christians. By these the spiritual quality of all else must be measured, whether it be the ten commandments of Moses or the Sermons of Paul; the encyclical of a Pope or the pronouncement of a World Council of Churches, the ethics of an individual or the politics of a nation. To what degree are these in harmony with the discernible mind, spirit and person of Christ? To the degree that they are in harmony they are Christian; to the degree they are not in harmony they are less than Christian. This is the Christian test. For it is based on Christ.

But what is our best aid for discerning the mind and spirit and person of Jesus? The answer, of course, is the gospels of our New Testament. To quote Dr. Smart again, "There is probably not a person living who could over a considerable period of time spend twenty minutes a day in the presence of Jesus as the gospels have pictured him without having his life profoundly influenced by him one way or another. There is so much spiritual power there that one cannot be exposed to it and remain casually indifferent." Do you doubt that? Well, Gamaliel Bradford doubted it too. As a matter of fact, when he was fifty-eight he wrote: "The Bible itself has become utterly remote for me in these later years. I cannot read it, never do read a word of it. It partly bores me, and partly afflicts me with a strange uneasiness, as if, after all, hell were waiting for me around the corner."

But four years later Gamaliel Bradford found it necessary to read the Gospels in preparation for a chapter of his autobiography. When his book appeared he minced no words, saying: "Among the varied agencies for disciplining the mutinous, rebellious, all-engrossing I, none probably has been more notable or more efficient than the life and teaching of Jesus. Therefore it seems fitting as typical of those agencies to make the figure of Jesus and what he represents a central element and as it were the keystone in the structure of this book." And do you know the name of that book: "Life and I." After exposing himself to the gospel story Gamaliel Bradford had given Jesus the central place in his story. As Dr. Lawrence Nelson, who records this incident, puts it: "The great biographer has found the Great Biography."

You and I are not great biographers. And yet when each of us hands in the final copy of his original story, Life and I, the greatness of that individual biography is going to be measurably determined by the amount of time we have spent under the influence of the Great Biography nestled in the midst of a rich and important religious literature which we call the Bible.

Unpublished Sermons

GEORGE S. SIUDY, pastor of the First Congregational Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, was the preacher for the huge inter-faith outdoor service during the annual Aquatennial celebration in Minneapolis last July. As a basis for his sermon he used Isaiah 66:6—"A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord. . ."

Noise from the City

The noises a people make, began Mr. Siudy, provide clues to the state of their spiritual and moral life. For example, one of the loudest noises of our age is the *noise of production.* We who live in cities listen to the ring of hammers, the buzz of saws, the staccato of steel riveters, the pound of machines, the roar of blast furnaces, the clang and clatter of a steam shovel. One hundred years ago, the people of America set themselves the goal of production and wealth. We would become productive, rich, and comfortable. And whether or not we have become comfortable, we are rich and productive. But in our wealth and productivity there are evidences that we may succumb to dangerous temptations which always go with wealth.

The temptation to become immersed in the material is one of the first temptations of a productive people. A great contemporary preacher says that we have suffered just that. He points out: "Trade has become religion. The market report is its Bible, the bank its Church, the efficiency expert its prophet, and the directors meeting its sacrament."

Another temptation which we are in danger of giving in to is the temptation to put production above personality. Oliver Goldsmith describes our danger:

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay. . ."

A third temptation to which we may succumb in our present position of wealth and producitivity is yielding to pride in our wealth. Once in her history, Israel was rich. But God spoke through a prophet, Jeremiah, a word of doom: "Your wickedness consists in your arrogance over your wealth. Your sin is that you gloat in the possession of what really is evidence of your unrighteousness. For you have your wealth as the result of your greed and obsession with the material and as the fruit of your robbery of the poor." Pride is a mark of corruption in the human spirit. It prevents a man from seeing himself in his real dimensions.

Another noise we are accustomed to hear in the city is the *noise of technical advance:* the drone of aeroplane engines, the roaring hiss of jet propulsion, the sound of a subway or an express train, the echo of wheel-borne traffic up a skyscraper canyon. We who make these sounds possible are a people dominated by concern for scientific progress. But these *things* of progress do not begin to meet our needs. Life is more than machines and arithmetic and chemistry. Machines cannot tell us what we must do with them, or, once we have them, how we can find happiness; and there are no chemicals to compel us to use them righteously, to do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

There is another noise some of us have heard at first hand or which has been echoed to the rest of us by newsreels and radio. It is like the noise spoken of by Isaiah when he tells Jerusalem that it will soon hear "a voice of noise from the city, a voice from the Temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies." This particular "noise from the city" is the *noise of judgment.* We have heard these noises of judgment in our cities: the wail of the air-raid siren, the chatter of machine-guns, the vibrating drone of death-laden super-fortresses, the

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screech of bombs, the crackle of fire. The judgment which the world has borne in our time is not a judgment brought about because of its ingenuity. It is a judgment upon our morals: our lust for power, our rivalry and hates, our callous-hardened sympathies, our spiritual inability to cooperate.

But there is in our cities a noise which raises hope. It is the *noise of spiritual life.* The Psalmist writes of this kind of noise, "Make a joyful noise unto God, all the earth: sing forth the glory of his name: make his praise glorious." There are people in the city who yet "make a joyful noise unto God." They are a people who are quick to listen for "a voice from the Lord" amid the noises of judgment. They echo in their inner heart the words of Thomas á Kempis, "Therefore, lest the word heard and not done be to me my judgment, or the world known and not loved, or the word believed and not kept, speak thou Lord, for thy servant heareth. Thou hast words of life everlasting; speak to me some manner of comfort to my soul and to the amendment of my life; and to thee Lord be praise, glory, and everlasting honor."

Around the Mountain

HERE IS A SERMON aimed at the tendency of people to get bogged down in rounds of petty worries, futile procedures, and narrow moral concerns. What should we do about it? The preacher, Mr. Edwin Kendricks Roberts, pastor of the Merriam Park Presbyterian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, turns to an Old Testament story which he uses as a parable. The Children of Israel had been wandering around a mountain for many days, when the Lord finally said to Moses, their leader, "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward." (Deut 2:3) In other words, "All your struggling and straining isn't getting you anywhere. What you need is a new turn. Try another direction. Turn you northward."

In his application of this parable, Mr. Roberts suggests a numer of "mountains" people have gone around long enough. One of them, he says, is the frenzy regarding un-American activity. America needs a new direction. Instead of being negative, instead of regarding our heritage as something that must be carefully protected, our nation needs to assume a positive attitude. We need to come to grips with the fact that Communism and all other "isms" will have no message for a society that has abolished the exploitation of man by man.

The same truth applies to our country in connection with the problem of world peace. Everyone wants peace, yet we appear to be no nearer the goal of a warless world than we were ten years ago, before the last great war was fought. What can America do? Build more two ocean navies, a bigger 70 group air force? Increase the stockpiles of atomic weapons? Perhaps, as equipment for an international police force. But if we suppose that military preparedness and power is enough to insure our safety, America simply is going around the mountain. Harold Urey, winner of the Nobel prize in chemistry and one of our foremost atomic scientists, says: "There will never be a Maginot Line against the limitless power of the universe as developed by the limitless imagination of man." Dr. Urey adds: "Our defense is in control. The safety of our country in the future, like our personal safety in cities must rest upon the law and conscience of man." What a word for this hour. A new direction is needed.

Apply the same principle to the Church. It too has mountains that it has been going around long enough. One of them is the readiness to say, "O, this indifference! This worldliness! How can we do the things we ought to do? Or again we often hear people say, "O, these Catholics! They are all around us; they are having huge families; they are buying all the houses! What shall we do?" Hear the word of the Lord, "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward." How the Church needs to do just that, to recognize that a considerable part of the problem is not outside itself but within.

Likewise there are many mountains which we have encompassed as individuals: mountains of self-centeredness, mountains of sorrow, mountains of immorality. The application is endless. What people need to do, concludes Mr. Roberts, is to strike out in a new direction. "Turn you northward." Find the more important issues, the more adequate helps, and the better solutions to our problems.

Will Christ Be Present?

"WHAT THINK YE? That he will not come to the feast?" (John 11:55-57) is the text for a sermon entitled Will Christ Be Present, by Frank A. Settle, pastor of the Grove Avenue Methodist Church in Radford, Virginia. These words, asserts Mr. Settle, were spoken concerning Jesus and about the Passover feast. Today, almost two thousand years after Jesus came, we are celebrating another festival. We call is Christmas, because it is in honor of the Christ Child. However, the manner of celebrating his coming has left a question in our hearts also. Those of us who give any consideration to our Christian faith wonder if Christ will be present in America's manner of celebrating Christmas. "What think ye? That he will not come to the feast?"

Will Duranty, in his book, *I Write As I Please,* tells the story of the Russian Empress who visited a famine-stricken area of her realm in order to see the unfortunate condition of her subjects. However, her ministers spared her the discomfort of looking upon starving faces and witnessing the terror that had spread with the famine. They sent artists and workmen ahead of the royal party. The men built whole villages with beautiful cottages and clean streets. Only the fattest and best-fed of the peasants were allowed to cheer her carriage on the way. She completed her tour satisfied and happy that the tales of terror and starvation were false.

The pageantry arranged by the ministers obscured the truth. That is always the tragedy of mere pageantry. To day we stand in danger of allowing the pageantry of Christmas to obscure the truth about the significance of the birth of Jesus.

Even the gifts we offer in his name may obscure his presence. Recall the people in Alden's story, *Why the Chimes Rang?* They brought a variety of gifts, each hoping they would hear the chimes and thus know that their gift was regarded as the most precious. Only the child who forgot self rang the chimes.

I have been lifted by the great Christmas cantatas rendered by good choristers, but Christ seems even more real and near when I hear children's voices blending in Christmas carols, when they have no thought of "giving a performance," when they have lost themselves in the joyous abandon of song. I have heard then sing, oblivious of self and congregation, as though they were conscious of the Lord's approval whether the people listened approvingly or not.

Christ is also present when we share. It was not the pastor who originated the idea of making the decorating project a sharing one. I believe that Christ was speaking to the heart of the good woman who conceived the whole idea.

First, the men of the church brought the greens, and the women came with their white sheets to do their part. On the following day the children worked joyously as they made garlands and pinned on greens about the chancel rail and choir loft. Every twig for the occasion was pinned by a childish hand.

No one who was present at the closing moments of our dungaree and blue jeans decorating party for children and youth would doubt the presence of Christ. Like all boys and girls, we were nosiy at times; but we were diligent. Then at suppertime we stopped and everybody grabbed

for sandwiches and cocoa made by teachers. All were tired as we hung the garlands about the balcony after supper. Then we gathered in the front pews of the sanctuary to view our work. The boys and girls sang together, starting with the old familiar carols. They sang and sang. We could hardly stop them. By previous arrangement with five adults, the candles—over 200 of them—were lit.

Light from those candles radiated about the church. The beams were caught in the smiles of upturned and sometimes dirty little faces. Then there was an awed silence. We paused and offered a prayer of thanksgiving for willing hands and happy workmen. We dedicated all the loveliness we were viewing to God's glory, and turned homeward. One child lingered to speak to the chairman. "Oh, I think it is the most beautiful thing I ever saw—*our* church!"

Yes, at this Christmas season Christ will be present. He will be wherever we unselfishly observe his birth. He will be in every selfless note sung, in every unselfish word spoken, in every self-forgetful deed done. That radiant Presence will remain in the hearts and lives of those who will receive him.

Life's Leftovers

WINNERS sometimes are losers, but they are never never quitters, begins Roy Lawson Tawes, Pastor of the Avenue Methodist Church in Milford, Delaware. Victors of life are those who endure and carry on.

The text is from a suggestive story of the Old Testament. The prophet of the Lord speaks to a widow in distress: "Live thou and thy children of the rest." (II Kings 4:7) A good woman had lost her good husband in death. The widow's grief was double in the threatened loss of her sons in bondage for debts unpaid. Elijah, the prophet, was called in. His quick and pointed questioning bore down almost cruelly on the human situation: "What hast thou in the house?" There was but one answer to that. Only a pot of oil! Yet the prophet was helpful. He revealed that God uses what we have available for him to use. It may be little enough, but God can make much of it.

Before life's leftovers can be used, first of all, we must have faith in God. Many are unfair to God. They call upon him only when they are in a pinch; when they are crowded into a corner. Two men were caught in a strong wind at sea. Neither knew how to pray, but one stumbled at it. Said he: "O Lord, I haven't bothered you for fifteen years. And I promise you now, if you get me out of this mess, I won't bother you for fifteen more." The home to which the prophet came had the latchstring out for God at all times.

Secondly, before life's leftovers can be used, ours must be a house of righteousness. It is written that "the house of the righteous shall stand." The widow and her sons had friends who rushed to the assistance of the troubled household. They gladly loaned their vessels for more oil. How often God has come to his own through friends.

Having faith and righteousness, God can help us use what is left after any misfortune. A slave was exchanged for a horse. Before God wrote the last chapter in that life story, George Washington Carver became one of the world's renowned scientists. This Negro servant of mankind used what was left. God gave him a peanut, and he did wonders with it. What did this man say as to his work? He credited faith. "God showed me what to do," he said. God will show us also.

"If you are interested in the country only for the sake of painting it, you'll never learn to see the country."—C. S. Lewis.

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It is too generally true that the Christmas Spirit is no longer lived than the Christmas Trees in our parlors.

GOD

Darken the room as much as possible. After a moment of silence, tell the audience in a low quiet voice to use their imagination, and imagine a strange powerful creature somewhere in the room.

What is the first thing you want to know about such a creature? Would you want to know if he had legs like a man, talked, had a head and eyes? Would it satisfy you to know such things? What would you really like to know about the strange powerful creature in the same room with you? If you had a chance to ask one question about it, what would that question be?—IS IT GOOD? Exactly!

We do not know very much about God. We know he is a great and powerful being of some kind, but we don't know what he looks like. Do we need to know what God looks like? What would we like to know for sure?—IS GOD GOOD?!

And Jesus helps us to believe he is.

THE BOOK OF LIFE

Place a Bible on a stand in the center of the platform. From the Bible run 6 ribbons about 10 feet in length. At the end of each ribbon fasten a small envelope containing a card. Invite 3 boys and 3 girls to hold the envelopes.

Each envelope represents a fundamental life-need. Have each child open the envelope which he holds and read the card inside. Then, let him trace the ribbon to the Bible and read the appropriate passage marked. For example:

1. We need knowledge of God to glorify life. (Passages in either the Psalms or the Prophets)
2. We need beautiful poetry and prayers to enrich life. (Passages in the Psalms)
3. We need moral guidance to keep life pure. (Mosaic codes, Prophets, Sermon on the Mount)
4. We need encouragement to make life successful. (Psalms and writings of St. Paul)
5. We need to know some rules for friendships to make life happy. (Sayings of Jesus)
6. We need stories about great heroes to reveal the true meaning of life. (Stories about Abraham, Moses, David)

Crumbs of Life

ANNOUNCE to your audience that you are hungry and would like to have someone get you some food. According to a previous arrangement someone will bring you a heaping plate of sandwiches and cake. "Ah," you will say, "now I can eat and satisfy my hunger." Whereupon you will scrape off a few crumbs and eat them heartily. The children will laugh. They should.

It is ludicrous indeed that while people are surrounded with an abundance of life's most nourishing values, they choose to starve themselves on crumbs.

Air or Action

ASK the audience if they knew you were a great artist. After much boasting, proceed to demonstrate your skill by turning your back to them and painting an elaborate picture—in the air. When you have finished, ask them how they like it. They will tell you what you want to hear.

There are people who brag about their goodness and ability. The only trouble is, *you can't see it!*

STICKS DECORATED

Hold two candles before the audience. One is quite elaborate, the other plain. Ask those in the audience which candle they would prefer to own. Most of them will choose the elaborate one. Explain that if those who chose the elaborate candle ever needed to burn the candle for light they would be disappointed, for the candle is nothing but a stick of wood decorated.

Many people are like the fancy candle. They look nice, they appear in prominent places, they are popular, but when they are needed for service they refuse to function.

Sticks decorated!

Too Close

ASK the audience which is smoother, a billiard ball or the earth. (Exhibit a billiard ball.) A billiard ball is much smoother. And yet, if the earth were as small as the billiard ball, the earth would be smoother. As rough as the earth seems, proportionately it is really smoother than a billiard ball.

We are too close to the earth. That is why it seems so rough. When you ride in an aeroplane don't the hills and mountains level out? Do you not suppose that if we were a million miles away from the earth, the earth would seem perfectly smooth?

When our troubles seem large, let us remember that we are too close, that by the time we are five or ten years away from them they will level out into insignificance.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION IN AMERICAN LIFE

By ROBERT J. McCRACKEN

AMERICA probably is more irreligious now than at any time in its history. Convinced Christians are not only heavily outnumbered but in a minority. Scores of our politicians, economists, educationists, business men, labor leaders have no sense of there being anything above or beyond or outlasting the ongoing natural process of which they form a part.

We merit the rebuke which Plato administered to his fellow-countrymen: "They have filled the city with docks and arsenals and trash of that kind; they have not

tried to put temperance and righteousness into the people's souls." We have taken endless pains in exploring external conditions and physical functions and all the elements which compose the environment of men but have been lamentably indifferent to the existence of his soul. We have created for ourselves numberless comforts and conveniences but we have not succeeded in mastering the instincts of greed, pugnacity and cruelty. We have multiplied our powers but our designs are sometimes as mean and narrow as when our forbears dwelt in ignorance and squalor.

I

At the moment we are spending billions on the perfecting of the technique whereby we may establish and extend our control of atomic energy. How much by comparison are we spending on the spiritual education and development of the rising generation? Our universities are crowded as never before. For one student, however, studying ethics or theology there, there are hundreds studying physics or chemistry or engineering. There could be no surer or quicker way of inviting trouble. We are neither schooling nor employing our best men for our highest work. Engineering sense is one thing and moral sense is another, but God help us if we go on cultivating the one and neglecting the other.

One hopeful sign is that here and there, and not least among the scientists, there are men and women who see that the spiritual element in civilization must be cultivated equally with the material, and that at the moment it is the spiritual element that needs attention most if the life of twentieth century man is not to become, in the words of John Hobbes, "nasty, brutish and short."

II

The question is not whether man's political skill can catch up with his technical skill. Primarily it is not a problem of politics but of religion. At rock bottom the question is: Can we get people to do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with God? Our basic trouble has to do with morals and morale. Things have come to such a pass with us that only one thing can save us—a spiritual conversion, a deliberate turning to God and Christ and goodness, with the resolve that first things will be put first and not last.

Preachers have been saying that for years. Nowadays there are columnists, scientists and educators who are saying much the same thing. A physicist in a state university recently put it thus: "I have come to three conclusions. The first is that salvation is not to be found in science. Secondly, we must have a moral revival. Thirdly, we can have no moral revival without a living religion."

When a nation has a living religion it acquires a habit of mind, a sense of values, a respect for standards which gives it stability and coherence. When the citizens of a nation have a living religion they have a definite ideal to guide, discipline and elevate their life and are like salt, light and leaven in the world.

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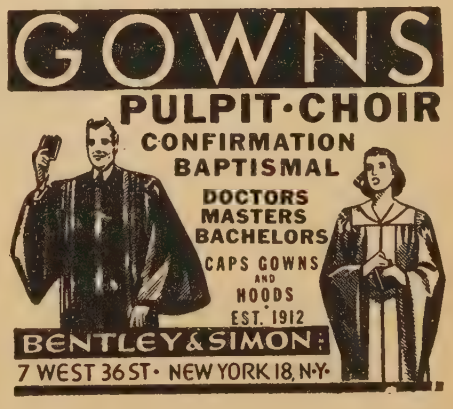


Adults Can Learn

By JAMES W. CARTY, JR.

TWO PASTORS were discussing adult education in the study of First Christian Church, Oklahoma City, Okla. The Rev. Don. M. Sheridan, a small thin man, with an irenic disposition, had been an outstanding state religious figure for 15 years. The Rev. William H. (Bill) Alexander, a tall, broad shouldered dynamo in his early thirties, was in the national spotlight for his theocratic community program.

"Your church needs serious adult education," said Mr. Sheridan.

"We already have a weekly attendance of 900 at Sunday School," said Mr. Alexander, "and two adult, mixed classes always have between 150 and 200 present."

"But they don't get enough meat in a one-hour period," said Mr. Sheridan. "Most teachers lack the background to select and get the heart of the lesson across."

"Do you think people would come during the week for extra Bible instruction?" asked Mr. Alexander. "Adults are awfully busy. We have a hard time getting them out to meetings."

"People might come if there were special courses. Courses with a general theme and a logical unity," said Mr. Sheridan. "As it is, Sunday school classes teach only isolated facts and unrelated principles."

"What would you try to accomplish?" asked Mr. Alexander.

"We would give several hundred of your leaders and members a perspective for approaching religious problems," answered Mr. Sheridan. "Adult education certainly is not a cure-all."

"In other words, it'd be a sort of college education in religion," said Mr. Alexander.

"Sure, the courses would teach about the great Christian figures and history," said Mr. Sheridan.

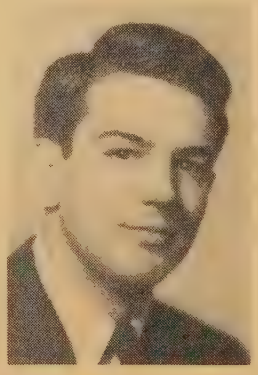
"And then you could bring Christianity up to date and make it concrete by applying it to today's problems," said Mr. Alexander. "It's a great idea and could revolutionize all of Christian education. I'll take it up with my elders right away."

"Good. I'll be glad to help you in any way. Teaching part-time or doing full-time work," said Mr. Sheridan.

At a special call meeting of the elders, Mr. Sheridan explained the purposes and methods of the program. Then meeting a second time, but without him present, the group expressed its individual opinions. All urged adoption of the subject and for approximately the same reasons: It would supplement the Youth Center and religious education program in providing substance and direction for the worship services. After their recommendations to the general church board, Mr. Sheridan was appointed Minister of Adult Education, beginning June 1, 1948.

● *Setting Up the Program*

Because no similar experiment had been attempted, Mr. Sheridan was



JAMES W. CARTY, JR.

pioneering in a new field. He faced many new and practical problems for the first time. What subjects should be included? For what duration, to be comprehensive and yet not boring and long? How many should be taught in one year and in what order? What reading material should be recommended? When should the work begin?

Oklahoma's weather decided the question of when. The hot, dry summer forced a postponement of the project until fall. Meanwhile, this left Mr. Sheridan three months for reflection upon the other perplexities. To obtain advice on these, he wrote more than 200 ministers and teachers. Then he began a one-month tour of midwestern churches to talk personally about the project with directors of religious education.

From the Great Books Institute of the University of Chicago, Mr. Sheridan obtained permission to begin its approved three-year program of study* and to teach a leader's course. Most ministers called his new idea "ambitious and worthwhile," but they offered little constructive opinion or advice.

Mr. Sheridan set up a curriculum of ten courses, five of which were to be taught the first year. Four were of a strictly religious nature. Covering both religious and non-religious material, the other was to function as a control course for purposes of comparison.

For the first course a problem theme was chosen, "What Did Jesus Think?" Of universal interest, Jesus was a religious personality that a majority of his congregation could approach with some preliminary information. He was an ideal place from which to start. Even the basic study of God's son was necessitated, however, by the prevailing lack of comprehensive information and the conflicting interpretations of his life.

Planned for the same three-month period was, "The Meaning of Church Membership." This was to be repeated quarterly. Actually, it was held in an informal, unregulated atmosphere for new church members. On Wednesday evenings preceding the weekly dinner and worship, the newcomers were taken on a tour of the church and told about basic points of First Christian Church and the Disciples of Christ. After one took the tour, he came only for the discussion part in some of the succeeding weeks. More than 300 new members benefitted from his approach in 1948-1949.

Two courses scheduled to follow the one on Jesus were, "Adventuring in New Translations" and "Christian Faith and the Artist." The former was constructed to provide such background information as who wrote the 66 Biblical books; why; the political, economic, and social circumstances, and the content. Also, by appreciating the need for new translations for different generations, individuals would appreciate need for and be less resistant to religious change. The latter was to demonstrate that poetry, myth, and mysticism are as needed in religion as reason.

"Great Books" would function in at least two major ways. It would instruct the congregation in literary classics, thus giving a cosmopolitan perspective with which to grasp ideas. As a control course, this one would enable the instructor to compare the attitudes of his students toward religious and non-religious literature

and questions. A side, incidental accomplishment would be the dignity accorded the great issues of life.

The two sections of the "Great Books" were set up for weekly meetings on Thursday and Friday evenings through a three-year period. The classes met in a room designed to encourage an informal atmosphere, and coffee was served midway in the discussions to augment this causal, but intelligent approach to literature.

Sections on "Jesus' Thought" were to meet for ten sessions on Tuesday mornings and evenings and on Sunday mornings. The Tuesday morning hour would be devoted to members of the women's council, which includes 700 persons. By repeating the lecture nights and Sundays, working women and men could attend in free hours. To seat the 250 who enrolled in the morning class, the Little Theater auditorium was utilized; the Sunday section was taught in a nearby funeral home.

● *Selling the Program*

Education does not lend itself to dramatic, emotionalized publicity, Mr. Sheridan knew. Although laymen granted the need of instruction for adults, they do not become excited about its concrete application in a practical program. Feeling they know as much about religion as the next person, such individuals believe they do not need such courses.

Getting the congregation aware of and participating in the project involved three steps. Mr. Sheridan first had to interpret his contribution and relate it to the total program of the church. Obtaining the backing of the city library and civic groups would add prestige to the venture. Advertising in secular, trade, and church publications were needed to explain how the program affected each individual in the community.

If the First Christian members conceived of Mr. Sheridan as an associate of Mr. Alexander, they would expect counseling, hospital calls, help at committee meetings, and speeches. Not only would these ministerial functions blind them to Mr. Sheridan's real role, but they would also take time from his study and preparation of courses. Therefore, his title, "Minister of Adult Education," was emphasized, denoting Mr. Sheridan's exact sphere of activity.

Mr. Sheridan discussed adult education with Clarance Paine, city librarian. Mr. Paine set up a handy shelf of reference material for the courses and encouraged three large department stores to carry displays of the books and posters explaining the program. The reserve stand at the library facilitated checking books out by placing all relevant material in one place. Keynoting the opening of the Great Books assignment on October 7, Mr. Paine addressed the group as being in on "the most exciting event he had experienced in Oklahoma City."

During July and August, Mr. Sheridan explained the program through visits to the seven adult Sunday School classes and his column in "First Christian," the weekly church newspaper received by 1,200 families. Mutiform letters were sent to 2,000 adult church members on September 1, two weeks prior to the beginning of the courses on "Jesus' Thought." Denominational prestige resulted through a feature article that Homer Haislip, field editor, wrote for *The Christian-Evangelist.*

It was hoped that non-church members would attend and so be introduced to a serious, questing Christianity. Weekly advertisements appeared in the "Briefs" section of the morning and evening dailies in Oklahoma City for three weeks preceding the course and another ad was placed in the monthly paper of the local high school teachers association. *The Daily Oklahomann* featured the project with a one page spread on December 6 and Miss Edith Johnson, senior editorial writer, penned a column on adult education.

● *Church Packs Course*

More than 500 persons enrolled in the four courses on Great Books, Jesus, New Translations, and Art. With the 300 in the "Meaning of Church Membership," this meant that 800 persons were directly influenced by the project. Seventy persons took the Great Books seminar. Because of the discussion method prescribed by the institute, this course had to be restricted in numbers to about 40 per group. The others were lecture-type, permitting as large an adult student body as the theater held.

Enrollment cards were used to discover a few pertinent facts, such as name, address, and phone number. With this data in hand, Mr. Sheridan could phone or visit individually the class members and learn about their backgrounds, interests, biases, and desires. Believing that long questions about personal backgrounds and interests might scare members into dropping the courses, such questions were not asked on the cards. No effort was made to reject persons with little background; interest was the one qualifying requirement. The secretary of Mr. Sheridan kept attendance records and informed absentees about dates and assignments of future meetings.

The material for the Great Books was prescribed by the institute. It included social-political philosophy, religious writings and drama, including Plato's *Republic,* Augustine's *Confessions,* Aristophanes' *Lysistrata,* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* The library and ministerial experience of Mr. Sheridan suggested the bibliography of his other courses. He picked both scholarly and popular books about Jesus' personality, his divinity, his historicity, and other characteristics. Some books were *The Historicity of Jesus,* by S. J. Case; *The Man Christ Jesus,* by John Knox; and *The Story of the Bible,* by Edgar Goodspeed.

● *Course Produces Results*

High attendance figures seemingly prove an interest of several groups in adult education. When 350 women, half of those belonging to the council, enroll in one or more of three religious courses, they undoubtedly feel a need for basic religious knowledge. Their consistent attendance over a period of 30 weeks also indicates a conservative trend toward the re-including of Christianity in daily activities. The success of the program with women seems guaranteed by the participation of one-fifth of adult women from the congregation.

The interest of men in the specific religious instruction offered during the first year was a surprising outcome to Mr. Sheridan. Twenty enrolled in the discussions on Great Books and approximately 80 others in the remaining courses. These 100 representing 12½ per cent of the 800 men affiliated with First Christian Church. Significance is to be seen in the fact that this total signifies 20 per cent of adults taking the courses. This latter figure is about 10 to 15 per cent higher than the participation of men in other than the Sunday worship services. A very significant fact.

Twenty-five non-church members joined the congregation principally because of the course and others began attending its services for the first time. Although this is only eight per cent of the persons who joined during 1948-1949, quality is found among the type of persons coming through this means. They are primarily the intellectuals, a group that ordinarily ignores churches. Non-church members exposed to Christianity through adult education included five public school teachers, a chemist, a physical scientist, one lawyer, and one certified accountant.

The high proportion of church school teachers and officials in the courses suggest their apparent felt need of knowledge based on discussion and study. Approximately 60 persons, or 75 per cent of these two church groups, participated in the project. Telling Mr. Sheridan they wanted to supplement their meager preparation as much as possible, seven teachers of adult classes enrolled in the weekly course offered by the Oklahoma City

Council of Churches on Sunday School lessons.

Mr. Sheridan has made two subjective judgments about the influence of the program. Reducing arrogance, first. The material made for moral, intellectual, and social humility. Before the instruction, many individuals believed they had a unified, consistent picture of Jesus and the rest of religion. Their changed attitude is best reflected by the new teaching methods adopted at the primary and elementary levels. Teachers asked more questions and stated tentative answers with less dogmatism and self-regard.

● *Education This Year*

Two different teaching methods were tried by Mr. Sheridan during 1948-1949. In the Great Books sections, he was the moderator. As such, he never told, only steered the problem to basic issues and away from tangental issues. In the remaining classes, he was a lecturer, because of the size and the students' inadequate religious backgrounds. In the work for 1949-1950, Mr. Sheridan intends to emphasize reading, self-help study, and question-discussions. If necessary, small groups will be divided into even smaller sections.

Courses scheduled for 1949-1950 follow the pattern begun the first year of including basic material as well as frills. "The Mind and Spirit of Paul" will portray the second great figure of Christianity. Historial perspective will be sought through "Great Men of the Centuries." Concrete application of Christianity to the modern world will be attempted through "Protestantism in the World Today."

Adult education is not a program with all solutions for man's aches and ails. But it lends dignity and seriousness to great questions and gives a perspective for viewing them.

That is the future plan and hope for the adult program at First Christian Church, Oklahoma City.

*The program has since been lengthened to four years.

Correction

The *Religion in American Life* effort in November was not sponsored by The Church World Service but by an organization known as Religion In American Life, formerly known as the United Church Canvass. The Church World Service was one of a number of interfaith agencies which co-operated in the nation-wide campaign.

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Armstrong, Homer J.: "Real Religion" (Dec.)
Bainton, Roland H.: "Our Protestant Witness" (Dec.)
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Batchelder, Robert C.: "A Singer of the Lord's Song" (Nov.)
Birky, H. Gordon: "A Military Emergency Declared on Jesus Christ" (May)
Black, Binney Simpson: "Christ Before Pilate" (March)
Blizzard, Samuel W., Jr.: "The Value of a Man" (Feb.)
Bonnell, John Sutherland: "The Faith That Dares" (Aug.)
Burkhart, Roy A.: "Anchors and Compulsions" (Jan.)
Daniels, Josephus: "A Layman Speaks to Young Preachers" (May)
Deems, Mervin M.: "Urgency, Humility, Craftsmanship" (Jan.)
Edwards, K. Morgan: "The Conquest of Doubt" (Aug.)
Elmer, Franklin D.: "Choosing Your Way to Faith" (Sept.)
Fallaw, Wesner: "The Cup of Trembling" (Aug.)
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Hope, Norman Victor: "World-Wide Communion" (Oct.)
Howse, Ernest Marshall: "The Spell of Immortality" (March)
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Walker, Alan: "Christianity on the Offensive" (Sept.)
Walker, Harold Blake: "One-Man Revolution" (Aug.)
Wingfield, Marshall: "God Is Our Hope" (July)
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Zimmerman, Fred: "God So Loved the World" (Dec.)

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Bell, James H.: "If I Were a Church Executive" (Dec.)
Birney, George Hugh: "Planning the Fall and Winter Program of Your Church" (Oct.)
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Westerberg, Wesley M.: "Teaching a Congregation to Worship" (Sept.)
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Book of the Month

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Dun, Angus: "Prospecting For a United Church" (Nov.)
Farmer, Herbert H.: "God and Men" (Feb.)
Harkness, Georgia: "Prayer and the Common Life" (May)
Latourette, Kenneth Scott: "The Christian Outlook" (Aug.)
Luccock, Robert E.: "The Lost Gospel" (April)
Morrison, Charles Clayton: "Can Protestantism Win America " (Dec.)
Sweet, William E.: "The American Churches, An Interpretation" (June)
Tillich, Paul: "The Shaking of the Foundations" (Sept.)
Van Doren, Carl: "The Great Rehearsal" (July)
Venable, Charles Leslie: "A Reading of Revelation" (Jan.)
Weaver, Richard M.: "Ideas Have Consequences" (March)

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Conrad, Leslie, Jr.: "The Day After Christmas" (Dec.)
Efird, Frank K.: "Do You Have a Wastebasket?" (June)
Fischbach, Julius: "Happy New Year!" (Jan.)
Fischbach, Julius: "What Is Your Name?" (Dec.)
Jeschke, Reuben P.: "The Landmark" (Sept.)
Lankler, Ralph C.: "Short Cuts" (May)
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Pleune, Peter H.: "A Snapshot of God" (Nov.)
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Bosley, Harold A.: "We Believe In the Church" (July)
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Colwell, Ernest Cadman: "Our Faithless Life" (Sept.)
Conn, Howard: "With One Sound of the Heart" (Oct.)
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Court, Frank A.: "The Art of Detachment" (Nov.)
Day, Albert Edward: "If Jesus Were President" (Nov.)
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Hackett, Allen: "The Cup We Bless" (Oct.)
Holme, Benjamin F.: "The Protestant Reformation" (Oct.)
Homrighausen, E. G.: "Go Make Disciples" (Dec.)
Horton, Walter M.: "Up, Hearts!" (Nov.)
Howard, William Clyde: "How to Love Your Enemies" (Feb.)
Hudnut, William H., Jr.: "On Being Spiritually Prepared for Life" (Aug.)
Jacobs, Charles F.: "The Man Who Disturbed People" (Sept.)
Jones, Edgar DeWitt: "Magnificent Reminders" (March)
Jordan, Orvis F.: "The Vista of the Years" (Jan.)
Langston, Ira W.: "God's Family Meal" (Oct.)
Leisher, Quentin: "Saved by Hope" (Aug.)
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Bousman, Gary: "The Local Church Paper" (April)
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Roblee, Frederick Andrew: "God's Plan for Your Life" (Jan.)
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Book of the Month

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Blanshard, Paul: "American Freedom and Catholic Power" (June)
De Wolf, I. Harold: "The Religious Revolt Against Reason" (Oct.)
Fey, Harold E.: "The Lord's Supper: Seven Meanings" (Jan.)
Fosdick, Harry Emerson: "The Man From Nazareth" (Nov.)
Harkness, Georgia: "The Gospel and Our World" (Dec.)
Niebuhr, Reinhold: "Faith and History" (July)
Parkes, James: "Judaism and Christianity" (March)
Scott, Ernest F.: "The Purpose of the Gospels" (May)
Stamm, Frederick K.: "Keeping Men on Their Feet" (Feb.)
Trueblood, Elton: "The Common Ventures of Life" (April)
Williams, Daniel Day: "God's Grace and Man's Hope" (Aug.)

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